

# MIDDLE EAST CONTEMPORARY SURVEY

Volume XIV  
1990

**AMI AYALON**  
Editor

Barbara Newson, Executive Editor

**The Moshe Dayan Center  
for Middle Eastern and African Studies  
The Shiloah Institute  
Tel Aviv University**

Westview Press  
BOULDER, SAN FRANCISCO, & OXFORD

# The Invasion of Islam

MARTIN KRAMER

In early 1990, the wounded spirit of Islam seemed to be healing. The reconciliations that had begun after the Iraqi-Iranian cease-fire of 1988 gained momentum. The Rushdie affair, and the resulting spasm of inquisitorial rectitude, began to subside. The pilgrimage controversy inched toward some sort of resolution. Islam appeared to be moving toward a semblance of equilibrium. Then, on the morning of 2 August, the world of Islam came completely unhinged.

Islam was invaded by barbarians. But who were they? Were they the armies of Saddam Husayn, who obliterated Kuwait and oppressed its Muslims? Or were they the armies of George Bush and his allies, who violated sacred Arabian space in order to usurp the collective resources of Muslims? The shots of 2 August unleashed a rumbling avalanche of declarations, conferences, and religious edicts (*fatwas*). It demolished the last illusion of Muslim solidarity, and left the true believers dazed and divided.

## THE RUSHDIE AFFAIR

During the previous year, the Muslim world had fought off a strictly symbolic invasion. *The Satanic Verses*, a novel by Indian-born British author Salman Rushdie, had provoked waves of protest, especially from Iran, where in February 1989 Khomeyni had issued a *fatwa* declaring Rushdie an apostate and demanding his death. The *fatwa* sent Rushdie into hiding under the protection of Scotland Yard's Special Branch. This led in turn to Iran's severing of diplomatic relations with Britain in March 1989. When Khomeyni died in June 1989, the *fatwa* still stood. (For the genesis of the Rushdie affair, see *MECS* 1989, pp. 173–80. The present chapter deals with the continuing Islamic debate over Rushdie. For Iranian-British relations, see chapter on Iran.)

In the debate among Muslims, all parties seemed to agree that the book insulted Islam. But opinions varied widely concerning the significance of the insult and whether Rushdie should die. These differences existed within Iran itself, and also between Iran and other centers of Muslim authority. In this manner, Rushdie's fate became entangled in the general struggle for primacy in Islam. As a result, the *fatwa* lingered on, leaving Rushdie in a limbo from which there was no apparent escape. A foreign hostage held at Iran's behest might reasonably hope for freedom, but Rushdie was held in the final death grip of Khomeyni himself.

## IRAN: CONSCIENCE OF ISLAM

Iran had led the charge against *The Satanic Verses*, and derived some marginal benefit in the wider Muslim world for having done so. It appeared as the conscience of Islam,

prepared to preserve the good name of the Prophet Muhammad from the heinous insults of an "apostate" and his foreign coconspirators. But Iran also paid a cost in its relations with Europe in general and Britain in particular for the alleged "barbarism" of Khomeyni's edict. Once cost began to outweigh benefit, an internal, though still muted, debate surfaced.

Iranian President 'Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani had a pragmatic view of the *fatwa*. He saw it as a useful political lever against Britain, but one that could be employed only if its effects could be mitigated in exchange for British concessions. Rafsanjani and his supporters therefore condemned Rushdie but tended to downplay the binding character of Khomeyni's ruling. In February, Rafsanjani stated that Khomeyni's *fatwa* was the opinion of one expert, "while others would see it differently."<sup>1</sup>

Rafsanjani's radical rivals were in the opposite corner, led by former interior minister 'Ali Akbar Mohtashemi, who interpreted the Rushdie affair in metahistorical terms. In their view, *The Satanic Verses* not only symbolized the West's timeless contempt for Islam, but by portraying the Prophet Muhammad as a "pragmatist" who distorted divine revelation for temporal purposes, the book posited the essential corruptibility of Islam, as well as of Iran's Islamic revolution. This slander, emanating from a Muslim, constituted apostasy, which is punishable in Islam by death. Khomeyni's *fatwa* was binding on all Muslims and absolutely irrevocable.

The only person in a position to decide the issue was Ayatollah Sayyid 'Ali Khameneh'i, Khomeyni's successor as leader of the Islamic Republic. When Khomeyni issued his original *fatwa*, Khameneh'i had suggested that Rushdie might be pardoned if he apologized. Khomeyni responded by reiterating his verdict, and determined that Rushdie had to die even if he became the most pious of Muslims. Khameneh'i subsequently fell in line. After Khameneh'i's election as leader upon Khomeyni's death, he adhered to Khomeyni's position, announcing that "the Imam Khomeyni's edict concerning Rushdie is based on divine verses, and just like divine verses, it stands firm and cannot be altered."<sup>2</sup> By comparing the *fatwa* to the Qur'an, Khameneh'i effectively ruled out any open tampering with the *fatwa*, although he was prepared to allow Rafsanjani a good deal of leeway in his diplomacy with Britain.

Eventually, that diplomacy produced results, skirting the Rushdie affair entirely. Iran had wanted the British government to denounce Rushdie's book and expel him. Instead, it settled for two British statements: the first by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in May, professing a profound respect for Islam; the second by Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd in August, reiterating that Britain had no responsibility for the publication of *The Satanic Verses*. Britain, for its part, had wanted Iran to rescind Khomeyni's *fatwa*. Instead, it settled for Rafsanjani's statement that Iran would "abide by international law" in the affair, i.e. that it would not openly incite murder on British soil. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait sped up the process of British-Iranian reconciliation; diplomatic relations were restored on 27 September.<sup>3</sup> But the Iranian Foreign Ministry affirmed that the *fatwa* still stood.<sup>4</sup> Other Iranian sources made the point even clearer. Tehran's Militant Clergy Association announced that there could be no link between the restored relations with Britain and the "implementation of a divine decree," and that the "brave men" of Islam would implement that decree "soon."<sup>5</sup>

### RUSHDIE'S RETURN TO ISLAM

Where did this leave Rushdie? Rushdie understood that he could never hope for Khomeyni's *fatwa* against him to be rescinded. For the Shi'i masses in Iran and beyond, the deceased founder of the Islamic Republic had been assimilated into the line of infallible imams. There would always be some zealot prepared to revalidate the *fatwa* by hunting down Rushdie, and the threat to his life could never be eliminated. But Rushdie believed the danger could be reduced if credible Muslim authorities could be persuaded to forgive him. To achieve this, however, he would have to repudiate at least parts of *The Satanic Verses*, a process which unfolded gradually during 1990.

Rushdie had made no statements during the year following Khomeyni's *fatwa*, but beginning in February 1990, he began to speak out through a series of essays and interviews. In these he apologized for the anguish that his book had caused, and expressed regret that the book had been interpreted wrongly as an assault on Islam. Rushdie called upon Muslims to reread the book as a parable, in accord with his original intent as author. He explained that since he did not consider himself a Muslim, and did not believe in God, he could not possibly be an apostate or a heretic. But at the same time, he insisted that the book be published in paperback, and he criticized the British decision not to prosecute those British Muslims who had incited openly for his murder.<sup>6</sup> This first round did little to mollify Rushdie's Muslim critics. Iranian figures were quick to reiterate the binding and irrevocable authority of Khomeyni's *fatwa*; pro-Iranian Muslims in Britain continued to demand the removal of the book from all stores and exile for Rushdie.

Still, Rushdie's tone of regret made it possible for some Muslims to contemplate rehabilitating him, provided he took additional steps. The effort to save him from his sin had the backing of Egypt and Saudi Arabia, whose religious leaders continued to deny Iran's claim to Islamic primacy. During the previous year, the leading 'ulama of both countries had denounced Rushdie, but they had also denounced Khomeyni's *fatwa*. Khomeyni did not have the authority to condemn Rushdie, they declared; the novelist should be tried by an Islamic court and there be offered the opportunity to recant. Iran's Muslim rivals were prepared to extend a hand to Rushdie, not out of sympathy for the plight of the author, but in order to undermine Iran's authority and win the gratitude of the West.

The coordinator of this bid was Hisham al-'Issawi, an Egyptian dentist and president of the Islamic Society for the Promotion of Religious Tolerance in the United Kingdom. Following Rushdie's statements of February, he proposed that a "warning to believers" be placed on the jacket of the book. (Pundits compared this proposal to cancer warnings on cigarette packs.) 'Issawi also began to appear in the media, promoting various ways of redeeming Rushdie in the eyes of Muslims. The Egyptian government sanctioned these efforts, and a solution acceptable both to Egypt and to Rushdie began to take form.

On 24 December, 'Issawi brought Rushdie before a group of Egyptian religious figures, including Muhammad 'Ali Mahjub, Egypt's minister of state for religious endowments and head of Egypt's Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs. In Mahjub's presence, Rushdie signed a document affirming that he did not agree with any statement made by any character in *The Satanic Verses* who "insult[s] the Prophet Muhammad or who cast[s] aspersions upon Islam or upon the authenticity of the

Holy Qur'an or who reject[s] the divinity of Allah." Rushdie then gave this remarkable description of his passage from disbelief to Islam:

I have been finding my own way towards an intellectual understanding of religion, and religion for me has always meant Islam. That journey is by no means over. I am certainly not a good Muslim. But I am able now to say that I am a Muslim...now Muslims can talk to Muslims and continue the process of reconciliation that began with my Christmas Eve meeting with six Muslim scholars.<sup>7</sup>

Rushdie agreed not to permit new translations of his book, and not to publish an English-language paperback "while any risk of further offense remains." He called on "Muslim organizations and governments everywhere, to join in the process of healing that we have begun."<sup>8</sup> Following Rushdie's signing of this statement, 'Issawi announced that the affair was over from the point of view of Islamic law. 'Issawi hoped Iran's clerics would meet with Rushdie, and even wrote to Khameneh'i, arguing that a repentant Rushdie might become a great force for Islam in the West and might bring many converts into the faith.

Khameneh'i, however, had no intention of contradicting the will of the late Khomeyni, and immediately retorted that Khomeyni's *fatwa* was unalterable even if Rushdie "repents and becomes the most pious person of the age."<sup>9</sup> In Lebanon, Hizballah's radio called Rushdie's repentance "a pitiful farce."<sup>10</sup> Rushdie's principal Muslim critic in Britain, the pro-Iranian publicist Kalim Siddiqui, was also not satisfied. Earlier in the year, he had announced that Rushdie must "come off his 'high horse' and realize that he has offended us, he has to apologize, and he has got to withdraw the book."<sup>11</sup> Siddiqui now argued that Rushdie could not dissociate himself from the statements of characters he himself had created, and called for the novelist's abduction for trial in Tehran.<sup>12</sup> Still, it was significant that Iran did not launch a major propaganda campaign against Egypt for sponsoring Rushdie's reentry into the Islamic faith. It helped that Egypt did not trumpet its role; Egypt also squelched rumors that Rushdie would visit Cairo. In any event, by late December both countries were preoccupied with the looming showdown in the Gulf.

As time passed, the tumult surrounding *The Satanic Verses* was bound to fade in the collective memory of Islam. The affair had already lost nearly all of its political import. But the Rushdie file could not be closed entirely because the *fatwa* had become part of the legacy of Khomeyni. Rushdie would never be completely safe. His round-the-clock protection during the first two years of his hiding had cost Britain £2m. (he himself had contributed £100,000),<sup>13</sup> and 1990 offered no exit from the impasse. *The Satanic Verses* remained stashed away in Iran's Islamic toolbox, to be reused in the future if it served Iran's purposes.

## IRAN'S ISLAMIC ROLE

The Rushdie affair personalized the larger issue of Iran's future role as the self-styled fortress of Islam. During the early 1980s, Khomeyni tried to build a pan-Islamic wall around Iran's revolution. Most of the bricks in that wall were Shi'i, although here and there one could discern Sunni elements as well. Iran dispensed patronage, money, and arms to a variety of Muslim movements, especially in Lebanon, Iraq, the Arab states



of the Gulf, and Afghanistan. But as the decade ended, Iran seemed to be neglectful of some of these clients, especially after the Iraqi-Iranian cease-fire.

In fact, Iran did not neglect its network, although it did try to streamline it. Iran reduced its emotional and financial investment in clients who had failed to make progress during the decade, such as Shi'i opposition movements in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and some of the Gulf states. Iran did not cut them off, but it did cut them back. More successful clients, such as Lebanon's Hizballah, continued to receive full Iranian support.<sup>14</sup>

### CONFERENCES IN TEHRAN

Basic maintenance of Iran's network depended on periodic conferences held in Tehran, which offered continuing opportunities for foreign Muslims to make their political pilgrimages and meet leading Iranian officials.

As in past years, the most important event of this kind was the annual Conference on Islamic Thought, which met for the eighth time from 28 January-4 February in Tehran. The Islamic Propagation Organization under Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati handled the logistics. Some 220 foreign 'ulama attended, including the spiritual leader of Lebanon's Hizballah, Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah; the self-styled *amir* of the Lebanon's Islamic Unification Movement, Shaykh Sa'id Sha'ban; and the New Delhi cleric, Imam 'Abdallah Bukhari. The Rushdie affair, which had so agitated the conferees the previous year, receded into the background of the proceedings, which were devoted to a review of Khomeyni's thought. In past years, the participants had been rewarded at the end of their stay with a visit to Khomeyni himself. This time, the organizers made other provisions. According to the official Iranian press report on the opening session, "slides on Imam Khomeyni's funeral ceremony were screened for the audience, who burst into tears out of deep sorrow."<sup>15</sup>

A similar gathering, entitled the first World Conference on the Ahl al-Bayt, met in Tehran from 20-24 May to mark the first anniversary of Khomeyni's death. The *Ahl al-bayt* were members of the Prophet Muhammad's family, revered with a particular fervor by Shi'is.<sup>16</sup> Khomeyni himself supposedly envisioned such a conference before his demise. The event reportedly drew 450 participants from 53 countries. Sayyid Ibrahim al-Amin, a Hizballah leader from Lebanon, presided over the gathering, which was addressed by Rafsanjani and Khameneh'i. Other speakers included Lebanon's Fadlallah and Iraqi opposition leader Sayyid Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim. The resolutions pledged support for various Muslim causes, foremost among them Palestine, while Saudi Arabia was denounced for its pilgrimage policies. The most noteworthy decision was the creation of a permanent League of the Ahl al-Bayt (*Rabitat ahl al-bayt*) under the auspices of Khameneh'i. The details remained murky, but the step revealed a desire to enhance the structure of Iran's network of clients.<sup>17</sup>

These clients wondered privately whether they could count on Iran to back them in future. Through such conferences, and more importantly, through consultations held behind the scenes during the conferences, Rafsanjani and Khameneh'i worked to bolster the morale of their Shi'i clients. The conferences served as assurances that those who had supported Iran would not be abandoned, despite the death of Khomeyni. Such assurances would soon be tested in the crucible of yet another Gulf war.

### HIZBALLAH AND IRAN

Hizballah in Lebanon remained the most successful of Iran's material and moral investments in the export of the revolution. Iran had created a movement in its own image on Lebanese ground, one that translated the message of Iran's revolution into fluent Arabic. Here was proof that Persians could lead Arabs toward the true Islam. But Iran derived more from Hizballah than simple pride of ownership. The movement rendered important services to Iran by performing the dirty and disavowable work of terror that had been an adjunct of Iranian policy throughout the 1980s. Nor had Hizballah exhausted its usefulness. It constituted Iran's surest foothold in the Arab world, and a valuable admission ticket to the frontier with Israel. (For Iran's past role in the creation of Lebanon's Hizballah and the movement's growth, see *MECS* 1983–84, pp. 171–73; 1984–85, pp. 155–59; 1986, pp. 139–44; 1987, pp. 165–69; 1988, pp. 191–94.)<sup>18</sup>

Yet Hizballah often seemed a precarious proposition. The movement grew like a weed when Lebanon was an untended garden. But now Syria, in partnership with many Lebanese factions, took up the hoe in the form of the Ta'if accords. Lebanon seemed to be moving toward refurbished confessionalism, the disarming of the militias, and the imposition of a Syrian protectorate in foreign affairs — all irreconcilable with Hizballah's long-term program for an Islamic Lebanon. "The Ta'if accord anchors Maronite privilege in the constitution," complained one Hizballah leader, Husayn al-Musawi. "It prevents the Muslims from realizing their rights."<sup>19</sup> But, according to Hizballah Secretary-General Shaykh Subhi al-Tufayli, the Ta'if accords would merely provide Lebanon with breathing space for all the parties to gather energy for the next round of battle.<sup>20</sup>

Hizballah was too shrewd to seek a confrontation with Syria, and, along with other militias, it began to evacuate from Greater Beirut. Some of its fighters in the southern suburbs put away their uniforms and guns and roamed the streets and alleyways in civilian clothes.<sup>21</sup> Others redeployed to Hizballah's original stronghold of Ba'albak in the Biqa' valley where they continued to patrol the streets.<sup>22</sup> Hizballah's leading figures met with the ministerial committee charged with implementing the overall security plan for Beirut, and discussion even began about Hizballah representation in the government.<sup>23</sup> Tufayli called such talk "premature," but he did not completely rule out some future participation in the Lebanese government.<sup>24</sup> Hizballah seemed to be moving toward a reluctant acceptance of the Syrian new order, so long as Syrian power and prestige lasted.

But on one point Hizballah remained adamant: it was a resistance movement, not a militia, and therefore claimed an exemption from the Ta'if provisions on the ultimate disarming of militias, since its guns were aimed at Israel.<sup>25</sup> This logic had driven Hizballah to seek access to South Lebanon, where it was locked in conflict with the movement's Syrian-backed Shi'i rival, the Amal movement. The two-year-old blood feud between Hizballah and Amal reached a new murderous level in 1990. Fighting raged on and off throughout the year in the Iqlim al-Tuffah region near Sidon, until both sides sat down in the fall and reached an accord mediated by Syria and Iran. Although Hizballah did well in the fighting, the November accord compelled both sides to yield to the Lebanese army.<sup>26</sup> Once again, Hizballah chose not to resist Syria's will and withdrew from the contested zone. But it still had access to South Lebanon through the western Biqa', and it reserved the right to operate against Israel. "Without

the resistance's struggle and operations, the Zionists will not leave Lebanon," declared Hizballah radio.<sup>27</sup> The future of Hizballah's resistance role in the south remained an open question at the year's end. (For more details on the Lebanese context of Hizballah, see chapter on Lebanon.)

Despite being immersed in Lebanon's little wars, Hizballah still had the power to put Iran at the center of high-stakes international diplomacy. The taking and holding of foreign hostages, more than any other act, bound Hizballah and Iran together in a community of interests.<sup>28</sup> Together they had turned the abduction of a handful of Westerners into a game of three-dimensional chess played on a dozen different boards by innumerable players. In this game, Iran and the Hizballah hostage-holders were partners. During the first years, Iran derived most of the benefits. In 1985 and 1986, the US traded American arms in exchange for hostages in a deal with Iran that shook the US Administration. "Our guys got taken to the cleaners," said then-US secretary of state George Shultz.<sup>29</sup> In 1988, France brought out its hostages by unfreezing Iranian assets, repaying contested loans, and handing out bribes. Said one close observer: "France poured so much money down so many throats, that to this day it is impossible for them to say which bribes were the effective ones."<sup>30</sup>

Hizballah and its Iranian patrons had been rewarded with arms and money. Now they sought the release of comrades held in Middle Eastern and Western jails for acts of violence perpetrated earlier in the decade. Hostages were not taken "to lay golden eggs," declared Hizballah radio, "but to seek the freedom of the youths held in the prisons of the Zionist enemy and those of some pro-Washington regimes."<sup>31</sup> Among these prisoners were:

(1) Anis Naccache (Naqqash), a Lebanese serving a life sentence in France for killing a bystander in a failed attempt to assassinate Iranian opposition leader Shahpur Bakhtyar in Paris in 1980.

(2) Mustafa Badr al-Din, a Lebanese Shi'i under sentence of death in Kuwait for his role in bombing the American and French embassies in Kuwait in 1983. Badr al-Din was the central figure in a group of 17 Lebanese and Iraqi members of the Shi'i Da'wa movement who had been arrested and convicted of the conspiracy. The release of Badr al-Din and those imprisoned with him was the most persistent demand made by the hostage-holders in Beirut. It was also the motive for two airline hijackings in the 1980s, during which passengers were executed to emphasize the demand.

(3) Muhammad 'Ali Hamada, a Lebanese Shi'i serving a life sentence in Germany for hijacking an American airliner and killing an American passenger in Beirut in 1985. He is the brother of Hizballah security chief 'Abd al-Hadi Hamada.

(4) Shaykh 'Abd al-Karim 'Ubayd, a Lebanese Shi'i cleric seized by Israel in South Lebanon in 1989 in order to force the release of three Israeli servicemen believed held by Hizballah. Israel and the Israel-backed South Lebanese Army (SLA) also held some 300 other Shi'i detainees.<sup>32</sup>

The demand for the release of comrades had always taken second place to Iran's need for arms and money. Now it was the turn of imprisoned "brethren" to derive equal benefit from hostage-holding.

The problem was that the US would no longer trade for American hostages, and insisted that they all be released before making any gestures toward Iran. In 1990, Rafsanjani finally decided that the time had come to whet the American appetite for renewed bartering. In February, an editorial in the *Tehran Times* opined that "Muslim



forces should work to get the hostages free with no precondition."<sup>33</sup> Rafsanjani announced that "my feeling is that the issue of the hostages is moving towards a solution."<sup>34</sup> Hizballah's Tufayli also expressed hope that "the hostage issue will be over," and suggested that Iran could use its influence "to the benefit of some hostages," providing that those who "want something from Iran pay the price."<sup>35</sup> On the other hand, 'Ali Akbar Mohtashemi, one of the early Iranian patrons of Hizballah, warned that "freedom for the hostages means breaking the chains of bloodthirsty wolves."<sup>36</sup>

Nevertheless, in April and May, two American hostages were freed unconditionally — the first release of Americans in over three years. But the US refused to agree to the reciprocal "gesture" of pressing Israel to release Shaykh 'Ubayd and some of its Shi'i detainees. "Muslims offer concessions and get stones thrown at them in return," lamented Hizballah leader Husayn al-Musawi.<sup>37</sup> In August, Iran tried to initiate the same process with Britain by releasing an Irishman who also held British nationality. Here, too, the negotiation hit a snag, and widespread predictions of the immediate release of additional British hostages proved to be groundless. A Rafsanjani-controlled newspaper had speculated early in the year that "1990 may be the year for the release of all hostages,"<sup>38</sup> but by the year's end, Iran and its Lebanese Shi'i clients still held six Americans, three British (including hostage mediator Terry Waite), two Germans, and possibly an Italian.

While Iran and Hizballah professed disappointment with the lack of response to their release of three Western hostages, it was still a year of homecoming for many of their own imprisoned "brethren":

(1) In July, France pardoned and expelled Anis Naccache, a delayed payment by the French for the freedom of all French hostages, the last of whom was released in 1988.<sup>39</sup> France won praise from Hizballah leaders for the move.<sup>40</sup>

(2) In August, fate contributed its share when Badr al-Din and other prisoners in Kuwait managed to escape in the tumult of the Iraqi invasion. Although no deal was involved, Badr al-Din had been saved from a death sentence by the holding of Western hostages in Lebanon.

(3) In October, the Israeli-backed SLA unilaterally released 40 Shi'is from the al-Khiyam prison in Israel's security zone in Lebanon. Israel apparently believed the gesture would open the door for a dialogue over three of its own missing servicemen. But Iran and Hizballah attributed the move to US pressure and chalked up this success to their holding and releasing of American hostages.

The hostage-holding partnership between Iran and Hizballah persisted because it worked too well to be dissolved. True, the Iranian state and Hizballah as a movement disavowed their association with terrorism. They wished for a measure of acceptance as respectable players in the international, regional, and Lebanese arena. But the hostage shell game brought too many benefits to be discarded altogether. It produced, in succession, arms, money, and freedom for imprisoned "brethren." It served to maintain an Iranian stake in the movement and prevent any Syrian attempt to eliminate Hizballah's strongholds. It also served as a vestigial reminder of the jihad against the West — a jihad that had once inspired suicide bombers and airline hijackers. However, the continued holding of these hostages could not conceal the truth: by late 1990, Hizballah was only a shadow of its former self. Like the Assassins of old, the modern-day zealots of Hizballah were losing their forbidding fortresses, and much of their original zeal.

## IRAN AND THE MUSLIM BRETHERN

The Muslim Brethren and Islamic Iran had been at odds for years. The Brethren had tacitly supported Iraq in the Iraqi-Iranian War; Iran had tacitly supported Syria's suppression of a Muslim Brethren uprising in 1982. The resulting dispute had often taken on the sectarian color of a Sunni-Shi'i polemic, especially over the quasi-imamate of Khomeyni. But later in 1990, events in the Gulf placed the Muslim Brethren and Islamic Iran on the same side, opposing the US deployment in Saudi Arabia (see below on the position of the Muslim Brethren in the Gulf crisis). In September, a 22-member delegation of Muslim Brethren visited Tehran in order to open a dialogue. The group was led by the general supervisor of the Muslim Brethren in Jordan, 'Abd al-Rahman Khalifa. He was accompanied by Rashid al-Ghannushi, an exiled leader of the Tunisian Islamic party, al-Nahda; Hasan al-Turabi, former secretary-general of Sudan's dissolved National Islamic Front; and Qazi Husayn Ahmad, secretary of the Pakistani Islamic party, Jama'ate Islami.<sup>41</sup>

The visit had a sequel in the form of an Islamic Conference on Palestine which met in Tehran from 4–6 December.<sup>42</sup> On this occasion, the Iranian government succeeded in seating its own clients at the same table with authoritative representatives of the Muslim Brethren. Tunisia's Ghannushi was the most prominent Sunni guest.<sup>43</sup> Other Muslim Brethren were seconds-in-command in such movements as the Jordanian Muslim Brethren, the Algerian Islamic Salvation Front, and the Palestinian Hamas.<sup>44</sup> Iran produced these clients: Fadlallah, Sha'ban, and Hizballah's 'Abbas al-Musawi, all from Lebanon; Baqir al-Hakim, leader of the Tehran-based Iraqi Shi'i opposition; Shaykh 'Abd al-'Aziz 'Uda and Fathi Shaqaqqi of the Iranian-backed branch of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad; and Khalid Fahum, Abu Musa, and Ahmad Jibril, all Damascus-based Palestinian extremists.

Rafsanjani opened the conference, and Khameneh'i addressed the participants during their visit to Khomeyni's *husayniyya* (Shi'i congregation hall). The participants also paid their respects at Khomeyni's mausoleum, where they were addressed by the late leader's son, Ahmad Khomeyni. The conference resolutions rejected any peaceful solution to the Palestine question and called for the liberation of all the land of Palestine through jihad. All states bordering on Israel were called upon to open those borders for the battle. The resolutions denounced the US for supporting "the terroristic Zionist entity," and for exploiting the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait for its own sinister purposes.<sup>45</sup>

The renewed dialogue between Islamic Iran and the Muslim Brethren could be read as further evidence of the cooling of Iran's zeal. So long as Khomeyni lived, Iran equated belief in Islam with belief in Khomeyni's divinely guided mission — a mission the Muslim Brethren could not recognize. With Khomeyni's death, however, the issue had become irrelevant. Still, the dialogue was prompted by specific political developments in the Gulf, and thus remained vulnerable to further political developments.

## SAUDI ARABIA'S DOUBLE NETWORK

A riyal here, a dollar there — this was how Saudi Arabia maintained its own network of Muslim clients, built assiduously over three decades. Saudi financial support assumed two forms: clandestine and overt.

### TIES TO ISLAMIC PARTIES

Clandestine support involved subsidies to Islamic political parties and groupings in other countries. In Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, and Tunisia, social unrest and a growing popular demand for political participation had opened cracks in the facades of authority put up by secular regimes. When these regimes felt threatened, they often announced their readiness to allow local or national elections, if only to create the illusion of participation. These "experiments in democracy" increased the possibilities for free political expression and organization for those prepared to set aside revolutionary politics and follow the electoral rules.

In many countries, the principal beneficiaries of this political exercise were Islamic movements in the mold of the Muslim Brethren. For decades, many of these movements had operated on the fringe of legality. In some countries, they were banned outright; in most, they were tolerated, provided they confined their activities to religion and social welfare. Within these limits, they built extensive and disciplined self-help networks. This positioned them to take full advantage of the new "experiments in democracy." When regimes began to allow elections, Islamic movements transformed their existing networks into well-oiled political parties.

As the "experiments in democracy" gained momentum, Islamic parties enjoyed a run of impressive electoral showings despite the fact that election laws were usually biased in favor of regime-sponsored parties. Islamists emerged as the largest opposition bloc in the April 1987 elections to the Egyptian National Assembly. They surprised all observers by their victories in the municipal elections in Israel's Arab cities and townships in February 1989. In elections for Tunisia's Chamber of Deputies in April 1989, candidates from a still-illegal Islamic party captured more votes than candidates from any of the legal opposition parties. In the November 1989 elections to the lower house of Jordan's National Assembly, Islamists captured 40% of the seats and emerged as the largest voting bloc in the house. In the Algerian municipal elections in June 1990, the Islamists trounced the ruling party, winning majorities in 55% of Algeria's local councils.<sup>46</sup>

In no instance, however, did any Islamic movement achieve power through elections; the regimes were sufficiently cautious not to allow the "experiments" to go too far. Still, the potential of these movements attracted the support of patrons eager to control them. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the Gulf Emirates bankrolled the Islamic parties; money from Gulf kings and emirs greased the wheels of their electoral triumphs. The Gulf potentates were not out to promote democracy, and carried out no "experiments in democracy" in their own backyards. But abroad, they sought to push their own conservative vision of Islam and buy up a controlling interest in the leadership of these movements.<sup>47</sup>

### ISLAMIC PHILANTHROPY

The other form of support was overt, and involved financial aid for ostensibly religious activities such as mosque-building, free Qur'an distribution, and missionary activity. As in the past, the principal conduit for this aid was the Mecca-based Muslim World League (MWL; *Rabitat al-'alam al-Islami*; on the MWL, see MECS 1981-82, pp. 295-97; 1982-83, pp. 246-47; 1983-84, pp. 165-66; 1984-85, p. 149; 1986, pp. 132-33; 1987, pp. 158-59; 1988, pp. 179-80, 199; 1989, pp. 18-19, 39-42, 51-56).

For the first part of the year, it was business as usual for the MWL. Three

conferences were held: the 30th annual session of the MWL's constituent council, the 14th annual meeting of the MWL's World Islamic Council of Mosques, and the 12th meeting of the MWL's Islamic Jurisprudence Academy. All three conferences were opened at one gathering, producing an avalanche of speeches and handshaking.<sup>48</sup> The organization's secretary-general, Dr. 'Abdallah 'Umar Nasif, continued to travel about the world, dispensing grants and collecting praise for Saudi Arabia. In Dacca, Bangladesh, he inaugurated a higher institute of Islamic studies,<sup>49</sup> and in Beijing he discussed Arabic instruction and library acquisitions with Beijing University officials.<sup>50</sup>

The MWL also took a growing interest in the collapse of the Communist regimes of southeastern Europe and the resulting opportunities for influencing the Muslims of Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Albania. The mufti of Bulgaria visited Mecca at Nasif's invitation, and a MWL delegation arrived in southeastern Europe and the Soviet Union.<sup>51</sup> There were also reports on grants. The MWL built an orphanage for 350 youngsters in Kampala, Uganda,<sup>52</sup> and adopted 2,000 Palestinian orphans in Jordan.<sup>53</sup> It also contributed SR1m. for the completion of the major Tokyo mosque whose construction had been halted in 1986.<sup>54</sup> Unlike Saudi subsidies to Islamic political parties, such charitable grants received a surfeit of attention from the Saudi media.

Nevertheless, the MWL lamented the limited resources at its disposal. It was funded solely by the Saudi government; according to Nasif, the only other income came from two or three religious endowments (*awqaf*) contributed by individuals. The MWL could deploy only 1,000 missionaries when 100,000 were needed. It had founded 50 hospitals but could not maintain them. In Somalia, for example, a MWL hospital was turned over to Christian missionaries for lack of resources.<sup>55</sup> Nasif, therefore, lobbied domestically for a share of the diminishing national pie.

But hospitals in Somalia were not high-visibility projects. The Saudi government preferred putting more money into prizes, most notably the King Faysal Foundation prizes for service to Islam, Islamic economics, and Islamic studies. These were world-class awards. Winners received \$100,000, a 22-carat gold medallion of 200g., and a deluxe leather-bound certificate inscribed in calligraphy. The prize for service to Islam in 1990 went to Shaykh 'Ali al-Tantawi, an octogenarian television evangelist. Since the establishment of the prizes in 1976, a full 90% of the winners had been nominated by the Saudi-based World Assembly of Muslim Youth, yet another arm of Saudi influence among Muslims abroad.<sup>56</sup> The prizes were a powerful incentive for cooperation with the Saudi vision of Islam.

The riyal-fueled networks of Islamic patronage had served the Saudis well in the past. But the true strength of the web of funding and obligation would be tested later in the year when Saudi Arabia summoned its stipendiaries to endorse the deployment of foreign troops on Arabia's sacred soil (see below).

## LIBYAN DISTRACTIONS

Libya under Mu'ammarr al-Qadhafi also had pretensions to the leadership of Islam. While Libya did not have anything like the historical weight of either Saudi Arabia or Iran in Islam, it did possess considerable resources which Qadhafi used to promote his own idiosyncratic reading of the faith. As in the past, Libya's instrument of Islamic influence remained the Tripoli-based World Islamic Call Society (WICS; *Jam'iyyat al-da'wa al-Islamiyya al-'alamiyya*), whose secretary-general was Muhammad Ahmad



al-Sharif. The WICS marked its 20th anniversary during the year. (On the past activities of the WICS, see *MECS* 1981–82, pp. 293–94; 1982–83, p. 245; 1984–85, p. 161; 1986, pp. 146–48; 1987, pp. 161–62; 1988, pp. 194–96; 1989, pp. 186–87.)

Like the MWL, the WICS engaged in a wide range of missionary activities. It printed Qur'ans (more than 800,000 in 1989),<sup>57</sup> and it participated in book fairs (15 in 1990).<sup>58</sup> It sponsored the World Islamic Call Faculty, which ran institutes in London, Tripoli, Beirut, Damascus, and Karachi. It also organized an ongoing series of conferences. The WICS World Council held its ninth session from 7–10 May in Dakar, Senegal.<sup>59</sup> The fourth general conference of the WICS met in Tripoli from 24–28 September, attended by 450 'ulama and activists from 80 countries.<sup>60</sup>

The point of these gatherings was to keep Libya's Muslim clients on the shortest possible leash. After the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait (see below), it was especially important to instruct them in the nuances of the Libyan position. This was done in an "extraordinary conference" of the World Islamic Peoples' Leadership (WIPL), yet another subsidiary of the WICS, also headed by Sharif. The gathering met in Tripoli from 30–31 October and was attended by over 220 "leaders of Islamic parties, movements, organizations, and societies." In its final statement, the WIPL endorsed the peculiarly Libyan view that Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia were all victims of the US and that the US had used their dispute as an excuse to deploy its own forces. The WIPL called for a simultaneous withdrawal of Iraqi and foreign forces; the transfer of Bubiyan Island and the Rumayla oil field to Iraq; restored Kuwaiti sovereignty; and the creation of a binding, united Arab oil policy.<sup>61</sup> This was identical, of course, to the position taken by Qadhdhafi himself. (For the overall Muslim reaction to the Iraqi invasion and foreign deployment, see below.)

A unique feature of the WICS was its connection with the Vatican's Secretariat for Non-Christians in Rome. The secretariat, which was empowered by the Holy See to conduct a Catholic dialogue with Muslims, had dealt with Libya in the past, but the Libyan propensity to politicize all contacts had led to a virtual suspension of the religious dialogue in 1976.<sup>62</sup> In March 1989, however, a delegation from the secretariat visited Tripoli, and in early 1990 a WICS delegation, led by Sharif, visited Rome and had an audience with Pope John Paul II.<sup>63</sup> The actual purpose of these renewed meetings, despite the declarations about mutual understanding, was to set ground rules for the missionary competition between the two faiths. The approach of the WICS remained "triumphalist," in the jargon of the Muslim-Christian dialogue. As Sharif put it at a conference in Tripoli later in the year, "Do we want to be followers of the big powers? Or do we want to restore the glory of Islam and take part in a new world civilization so that Islam may dominate as it once did before?"<sup>64</sup> Domination obviously remained Islam's preference.

Still, the WICS remained largely a reflection of Qadhdhafi's eccentricity. As if to remind the Muslim world of this, the WICS placed emphasis on the advent of the new Islamic century according to Qadhdhafi, who had reset the Islamic calendar 10 years back by dating it from the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632 rather than from his emigration (*hijra*) from Mecca to Medina in 622. By Qadhdhafi's reckoning, the Islamic year was 1399, a portentous date. But the rest of the Islamic world was already 10 years into Islam's 15th century. The time warp between Libya and the rest of Islam symbolized the marginality of the WICS in the larger contest for Muslim primacy.

## THE PILGRIMAGE OF 1990

For a full decade, the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina had been a tinderbox of conflict and a faithful reflection of the divided state of Islam. The principal antagonists were Saudi Arabia, led by the self-styled "Custodian of the Two Holy Sanctuaries," King Fahd; and the Islamic Republic of Iran, formerly led by "the Imam" Khomeyni, and now led by his successor, "the Leader" Khameneh'i. As these titles indicated, both regimes claimed the right to define the true faith. Both regimes also saw Mecca and Medina as an arena to establish that claim.

As a result, the holy cities of Arabia had witnessed pilgrimage-related demonstrations, riots, police shootings, terror bombings, and executions by beheading. Since 1987, when more than 400 persons died in clashes between Iranian pilgrims and Saudi security forces, the Saudi government had introduced a three-year quota system that would have reduced the annual number of Iranian pilgrims by two thirds (from 150,000 in 1987 to about 45,000). Rather than accede to this quota, Iran boycotted the pilgrimage in 1988 and 1989. As 1990 unfolded, the question of Iranian participation again loomed large. (For the development of the pilgrimage controversy since Iran's revolution, see *MECS* 1981–82, pp. 284–88, 301–3; 1982–83, pp. 238, 249–51; 1983–84, pp. 175–77; 1984–85, pp. 161–64; 1986, pp. 149–51; 1987, pp. 172–76; 1988, pp. 177–85; 1989, pp. 182–84.)<sup>65</sup>

### IRAN'S CONTINUING BOYCOTT

Iran tied its renewed participation in the pilgrimage to Saudi agreement to far-reaching concessions. On 11 April, 140 deputies of the Iranian Majlis issued an open letter that summarized these demands: first, that the Saudis "apologize for their treachery to the meek Iranian pilgrims"; second, that Saudi Arabia pay blood money to the families of the Iranian pilgrims killed "unlawfully" by Saudi security forces in 1987; third, that Saudi Arabia compensate Iranian pilgrims for "assets" seized from their caravans in the aftermath of that tragedy; fourth, that Saudi Arabia accept 150,000 Iranian pilgrims; and last, that these pilgrims be allowed to "disavow the pagans" — that is, hold demonstrations.<sup>66</sup>

As in past years, extensive behind-the-scenes mediation sought to bring about a renewed understanding between Saudi Arabia and Iran, but to no avail. On 15 April, a spokesman for the Saudi Ministry of Pilgrimage and Religious Endowments announced the final Saudi reply: only 45,000 Iranians would be admitted to Saudi Arabia, in accord with the quota system. The MWL also issued a statement rejecting demonstrations for the "disavowal of the pagans."<sup>67</sup> This Saudi stand led to a predictable Iranian decision to boycott the pilgrimage for a third consecutive year, a decision confirmed by the Iranian Foreign Ministry on 20 May.<sup>68</sup>

Still, the pilgrimage debate had lost some of its momentum. During the pilgrimage itself, Khameneh'i issued a message to the world's Muslims condemning the "despotic and traitorous rulers of the Hijaz" who had closed the door of the House of God on Muslim believers. "God's shrine is safe for US advisers and oil company owners, but unsafe for selfless Muslims," Khameneh'i lamented.<sup>69</sup> But since 1990 was the last scheduled year of the quota, Iran did not wish to commit any act that would block the return of Iran's pilgrims in 1991. The pilgrimage, therefore, passed without political incident.

However, an unexpected disaster ruined the prospect of an uneventful pilgrimage. The crowding of the holy sites had been a problem ever since the advent of air travel, which made Mecca and Medina accessible to all. Beginning in the 1970s, the number of pilgrims regularly reached record proportions. The quotas that went into effect in 1988 offered little relief, and the individual pilgrim experienced intense crowding at every site. During the 1980s, this human crush was compounded by conditions of unbearable heat as the lunar Islamic calendar dragged the pilgrimage season deep into the summer months.

On 2 July, these factors culminated in tragedy. Pilgrims had completed the ritual sacrifice at Mt. 'Arafat. The temperature was over 40°C. Thousands of people passing through a 550-meter-long pedestrian tunnel near Mina (7km. from Mecca) panicked. In the resulting stampede, 1,426 people were crushed to death or asphyxiated. According to the Saudi interior minister, Prince Na'if, the panic began when a few pilgrims fell off a packed overpass at the entrance to the tunnel.<sup>70</sup> But according to some witnesses, a power failure had cut off the air-conditioning system in the tunnel, causing pilgrims overcome by heat and lack of oxygen to stampede.<sup>71</sup> Other witnesses alleged that Saudi security authorities heard shouts of "God is Great" emanating from distressed pilgrims in the tunnel, and assumed a demonstration was brewing. They then cut off the power to the tunnel in order to force the crowd into the open.<sup>72</sup> Some Shi'i sources even claimed that Saudi security forces had fired bullets and tear gas at Muslims who were shouting "God is Great" at the entrance to the tunnel.<sup>73</sup> Senior Saudi sources denied all of these charges as completely baseless, asserting that there was no power failure and no police confrontation with pilgrims, and that the incident resulted entirely from the hysteria of the crowd.<sup>74</sup> King Fahd made a statement to the effect that the death of the pilgrims was inevitable. "It was fate," said Fahd. "Had they not died there, they would have died elsewhere and at the same predestined moment."<sup>75</sup>

Iranian and other Shi'i figures were quick to take issue.<sup>76</sup> Khameneh'i declared that "the incident is very suspicious. It is not easy for us to accept as the cause of the incident what has been said and claimed by the Saudi rulers." It had "not yet been disproved" that the incident was deliberate, said Khameneh'i, and he demanded that the governments of Muslim countries investigate the matter.<sup>77</sup> Hizballah's spiritual mentor, Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah, also called for the creation of a neutral Islamic committee to investigate the incident, which he attributed to Saudi "mismanagement."<sup>78</sup> Mohtashemi went further, seeing a conspiracy in the tunnel deaths. With the three-year quota system for the pilgrimage ending in 1990, the Saudis would use the incident in order to justify still more stringent quotas in future, he predicted.<sup>79</sup>

Despite these accusations, Iran did not launch a worldwide campaign to besmirch Saudi Arabia's pilgrimage management, as it had done in 1987. In the first place, most Muslims plainly believed that the deaths were accidental. Secondly, the victims were not Iranians; most were Indonesian and Turkish pilgrims. In both these countries, questions were raised about Saudi procedures during and after the tunnel catastrophe. Indonesian Muslim groups demanded that Saudi Arabia shoulder the responsibility, and the Indonesian minister of religious affairs sought a full accounting from the Saudi authorities.<sup>80</sup> Opposition parties in Turkey brought the parliament out of summer recess to debate the tragedy on 19 July.<sup>81</sup> But neither government sought to turn the event into a political issue or demand an international investigation. Iran,



therefore, cited the incident as further evidence of Saudi incompetence, but refrained from making demeaning denunciations. Iran's restraint indicated that it did not want to close the door on renewed participation in the pilgrimage in 1991.

Contacts toward resolving the pilgrimage controversy continued between Iran and Saudi Arabia as the year ended. In September, Saudi Foreign Minister Sa'ud al-Faysal met Iranian Foreign Minister 'Ali Akbar Velayati in New York and discussed the 1991 pilgrimage. Publicly, Sa'ud al-Faysal announced that "we are very eager to see the Muslim people of Iran travel to Saudi Arabia this year to perform their pilgrimage rituals."<sup>82</sup> Velayati expressed optimism that "our pilgrims will be able to perform the important religious-political hajj rituals this year."<sup>83</sup> Privately, Sa'ud al-Faysal reportedly offered to accept a larger number of Iranian pilgrims in 1991. The Saudi minister also proposed that the Iranians hold their rally in a "fixed" place, without marching through the streets of Mecca. At that fixed point, Khameneh'i's annual message could be read to the pilgrims, just as Khomeyni's message had been read in the past. The Saudis repeated the offer during the GCC meeting in Doha, Qatar, on 23–24 December, which Iran attended as an observer. There Saudi Arabia reportedly proposed the figure of 90,000 Iranian pilgrims. At year's end, the offer was still under consideration in Tehran.<sup>84</sup>

#### SOVIET MUSLIMS IN MECCA

The 1990 pilgrimage was a barometer of change in another important part of the Muslim world. From 1935, when Josef Stalin had banned the pilgrimage of Soviet Muslims to Mecca, barely more than a dozen Soviet Muslims had performed the rite each year. Mikhail Gorbachev began to reverse that policy. In April, the Soviet Union announced it would charter special direct flights to Saudi Arabia for the pilgrimage. The decision reflected the continued liberalization of Soviet religious policy, as well as the Soviet interest in normalized relations with Saudi Arabia.<sup>85</sup>

But the Soviet government also explained that it did not have the hard currency to pay for food and lodging for the pilgrims, and therefore limited the number of pilgrims to 1,500. Some 150 Soviet Muslim protesters held a demonstration in Moscow in late May to seek a lifting of this limit. "The Dynamo soccer team is allowed to have 600 supporters travel with it," complained 'Abbas Kebedov, cofounder of the new Islamic Revival Party in Astrakhan, "while only 1,000 Muslims are allowed to carry out their holy duty."<sup>86</sup> They also complained of the prohibitive price that the government charged for the flight and lodgings.<sup>87</sup> In the end, the Saudi government intervened and bore most of the costs for 1,525 Soviet Muslims who did perform the pilgrimage.

Gorbachev's policies held out the prospect of increased exchanges between Soviet Muslims and their coreligionists abroad. (On the growth of ties between Soviet Muslims and Islamic organizations in the Middle East, see *MECS* 1989, pp. 189–90.) In September, Saudi Arabia and the Soviet Union established diplomatic relations, and the Saudis sought to use this opportunity to expand their patronage. In late 1990, the Saudi minister of pilgrimage and religious endowments visited Tashkent to attend an Islamic conference. There, he and other Gulf Arab delegations received requests for financial aid to establish an Islamic college and to restore mosques.<sup>88</sup> Saudi Arabia also sent 1m. copies of the Qur'an to the Soviet Union, fresh from the presses of the King Fahd Complex for Printing the Holy Qur'an.<sup>89</sup> Soviet Islam was well on the way to complete integration into the global contest for primacy in Islam.



## THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE ORGANIZATION

The Jidda-based Islamic Conference Organization (ICO), as the inclusive organization of all Islamic states, tried to project a more unified image of Islam. On 7 February, the ICO celebrated its 20th anniversary, and ICO Secretary-General Hamid Algabid called on Muslims worldwide to observe the date as a day of "solidarity, brotherhood, and unity." The ICO sponsored receptions, exhibitions, a documentary film, commemorative postage stamps, and a satellite transmission of the Jidda ceremony to ICO member states.<sup>90</sup> Representatives of several member states issued a statement expressing their "full satisfaction" with the achievements of the ICO during its first two decades.<sup>91</sup> (For the ICO's past performance, see *MECS* 1981–82, pp. 283–84, 298–301; 1982–83, pp. 235–37; 1983–84, pp. 158–65; 1984–85, pp. 146–48; 1986, pp. 127–30; 1987, pp. 153–58; 1988, pp. 180–83; 1989, pp. 178–81.)

But one Muslim journalist offered a different view. In its first 20 years, the ICO had not achieved "anything significant. In fact, its first two decades have been marred by an embarrassing impotence to mediate in essentially Muslim disputes," wrote Mushtak Parker in *The Middle East*. The ICO had become an "organization of parleys," passing "ineffectual and in many instances unrealistic resolutions, more in tune with the wishes of political (and no doubt financial) paymasters than with the demands of realpolitik."<sup>92</sup> This criticism reflected the fundamental dilemma of the ICO. Saudi Arabia continued to treat the organization as a Saudi-financed instrument of its own foreign policy. Most member states, therefore, felt no desire to take their disputes to the ICO for arbitration or to support it financially.<sup>93</sup> The ICO thus specialized in convening conferences and issuing often-repetitive resolutions.

Egypt, however, stood to derive substantial benefit from the ICO as host of the ICO's 19th conference of foreign ministers, scheduled to meet in Cairo from 31 July–4 August.<sup>94</sup> The history of Egypt's relationship with the ICO had been a stormy one. Jamal Abdel Nasser had opposed the establishment of the ICO two decades earlier. Following the signing of the Camp David accords by Anwar al-Sadat in 1979, the organization suspended Egypt's membership. But Egypt returned to the ICO in 1984 and the organization subsequently became a convenient instrument for erasing the stigma of Egypt's adherence to peace with Israel. The foreign ministers' conference scheduled for Cairo would be the most important Islamic or Arab gathering held in Egypt since Camp David.

As usual, the matter of Iranian participation became the focus of preconference diplomacy. Iran did not regard the ICO as neutral ground, and kept well to the margins of its conferences by sending low-level representatives. Since the Iraqi-Iranian cease-fire, however, Saudi Arabia had worked to bring Iran under the ICO's umbrella, most notably during the ICO's foreign ministers' conference in Riyadh in March 1989. That conference had declared author Salman Rushdie an apostate, much to Iran's satisfaction. Now diplomatic efforts were invested to assure that Iran would be represented in Cairo by its foreign minister, Velayati.

For a time, it seemed he might attend. But two weeks before the conference, Velayati announced that Iran would send only a team of experts. The *Tehran Times*, which represented a conciliatory line in foreign policy, criticized this decision. There was "not much difference" between no presence and a low-level presence, it wrote. "Nonparticipation or a weak presence means [allowing Iran's] political adversaries to

push for their stances without a strong opposition."<sup>95</sup> In the end, Iran was the only member not represented at the ministerial level.

But this did not prevent Iran from making a strong showing in Cairo. On the eve of the conference, Iran announced that it would release Egyptians captured during the Iraqi-Iranian War. This new thaw in Egyptian-Iranian relations gave the conference an air of Islamic *rapprochement*.<sup>96</sup> However, in his remarks, the leader of the Iranian delegation, Muhammad 'Ali Taskhiri, made reference to the pilgrims killed in the tunnel near Mina. Muslims "experience a feeling of disappointment and shame because every year their greatest political and religious gathering is marred by some sort of painful tragedy." Muslims wanted to know the causes of the incident, he stated.<sup>97</sup> Saudi Foreign Minister Sa'ud al-Faysal rebutted, announcing that "the raising of this matter shows a lack of appreciation for this rostrum. This is not the place for abuse and the exploitation of the misfortunes of pious martyrs" whose deaths had been "an act of God which men could not have prevented."<sup>98</sup> This exchange left an impression of persistent division. As usual, the significance of Iran's participation remained ambiguous.

The conference agenda included 68 items, with the Palestinian issue figuring prominently, especially in relation to the question of increased Soviet Jewish immigration, which was roundly condemned in speeches and resolutions. But a new issue appeared on the agenda: the question of Kashmir, where tension between the Muslim population and the Indian government had culminated in violence. Earlier in the year, Algabid had issued a condemnation of "this blind repression unleashed against the population of Kashmir."<sup>99</sup> Pakistan now pressed hard for a resolution in favor of Kashmiri self-determination, an effort resisted by a number of member states that sought to avoid an explicit condemnation of India. The compromise resolution expressed regret at the violation of human rights in Kashmir, called for implementation of relevant UN resolutions, and offered to send a mediation mission.<sup>100</sup>

The agenda, however, skirted a brewing conflict between two of the ICO's own members. On the eve of the conference, Iraq had deployed troops along its border with Kuwait, and tension was high. Still, neither the Egyptian hosts nor the Saudi godfathers of the conference expected the evolving crisis to overtake their deliberations. An Egyptian spokesman declared on 30 July that the conference would not deal with the dispute between Iraq and Kuwait, which was a matter for mediation by the Arab League.<sup>101</sup>

On the morning of 2 August, the foreign ministers in Cairo awoke to discover that Iraqi forces had overrun Kuwait at dawn. The morning session of the conference was postponed as the ministers bustled about in consultations. There could be no doubt about the position of the ICO. Kuwait played an important role in the diplomacy and financing of the organization. The last Islamic summit had met in Kuwait in January 1987, and the ruler of Kuwait still presided over the summit's committees. After a quick round of talks, the Cairo conference condemned the Iraqi invasion as a violation of the ICO's charter, and called for the "immediate withdrawal" of Iraqi forces from Kuwait. The foreign ministers affirmed their "total solidarity with the emir, the government, and the people of Kuwait." But even here, the looming division within Islam manifested itself. In addition to Iraq, five members "refrained from approving" the resolution: Jordan, Mauritania, the PLO, Sudan, and Yemen, while Libya and Djibouti abstained from the voting.<sup>102</sup>

The elimination of one member state by another cast a heavy pall over the ICO; the fact that the invasion occurred in the midst of an ICO solidarity conference only dramatized the divided state of Islam. In October, Algabid announced the postponement of the ICO's sixth Islamic summit conference, which was scheduled to be held in Dakar, Senegal, in January 1991. The conference would be convened when "the Islamic world is in more harmony," he said.<sup>103</sup> No one knew when that harmony would prevail; in the meantime, the ICO adopted a low profile. Algabid gave Saudi Arabia and Kuwait the same support they had given the ICO, by publicizing the ICO resolution calling for Iraq's withdrawal.<sup>104</sup> The ICO also sponsored a meeting of foreign ministers at UN headquarters in New York on 1 October, chaired by the evicted emir of Kuwait.<sup>105</sup> Algabid visited Tehran as well, in the hopes of securing full Iranian participation in the next Islamic summit, whenever it might be held.

For some observers, this was not enough. Rafsanjani told Algabid that "the ICO has not performed its duties as it should in dealing with [the] acute problems of [the] Muslim states," and urged the organization to intervene in the Gulf crisis.<sup>106</sup> But the forces now in play dwarfed the ICO, and Algabid did not even seek to mediate. Halfhearted attempts to convene emergency conferences failed, since member states felt the ICO could do nothing but reiterate the resolution it had already adopted.<sup>107</sup> As fate would have it, the ICO's 20th anniversary was to be marked by one of the most astonishing displays of Islamic disunity in modern history.

## THE GULF CRISIS AND ISLAM

The unexpected Iraqi assault on Kuwait on 2 August sent shock waves throughout the ME and the world. Within days, a shaken Saudi Arabia authorized the deployment of American and other foreign forces on Saudi soil, while a cornered Iraq annexed Kuwait as its 19th province. For the remainder of the year, the crisis wound its way inexorably toward confrontation. But before the shooting war began, Iraq and Saudi Arabia launched a verbal war for the hearts and minds of Arab and Muslim peoples, with Islam quickly emerging as a predominant theme of this debate.

### SADDAM AND ISLAM: PRELUDE TO INVASION

As a rule, Saddam Husayn's Iraq had not cast itself as a contender in the struggle to represent Islam. Islam barely figured in the plethora of themes used by the state to mobilize support at home and abroad. The ruling Ba'th ideology usually assigned a cultural, not a political, role to Islam. Significantly, the Ba'th's ideological mentor, Michel 'Aflaq, was himself a Syrian Christian who had resettled in Iraq as Saddam's guest. The state ideology came as close to a pure form of secular Arab nationalism as any in the Arab world.

Still, Saddam was quite capable of striking an Islamic pose if he felt it served his purposes. During Iraq's long war with Iran, Khomeyni had directed a withering barrage of Islamic propaganda against Saddam, and Tehran had become the site of numerous Islamic conferences devoted to denunciations of the Iraqi regime. Saddam responded by seeking the endorsement of international Islamic opinion as well, through the creation of the Baghdad-based Popular Islamic Conference (see *MECS* 1982-83, pp. 243-45; 1984-85, p. 151; 1987, p. 438). The task of this body had been to issue denunciations of Iran, citing the same Islamic sources employed in Iranian



denunciations of Iraq. The organization had steadily grown in prominence and occupied its own building in Baghdad.

Following the cease-fire in the Iraqi-Iranian War in August 1988, the Popular Islamic Conference lost its primary mission. However, the escalating rhetorical battle between Iraq and the West during 1990, and especially Saddam's execution of a foreign journalist, as well as his threat to "burn half of Israel," created a new mission for the organization. It convened a gathering from 16–18 June to demonstrate "solidarity with Iraq" against "the Zionist-American-British conspiracy," bringing together 700 people from 70 countries in Baghdad's massive Palace of Conferences. Most of the participants were representatives of the Islamic establishment in the states that had been allied with Iraq during the Iraqi-Iranian War. The conference passed resolutions against "Zionist aggression" and in support of Iraq's right to build its "scientific base and deterrent force."<sup>108</sup>

Saddam realized that an appeal for Islamic solidarity was weakened by the Arab nationalist emphases in Iraq's official rhetoric. He therefore devoted much of his conference address to the relationship between Arabism and Islam. They were wholly compatible, Saddam maintained. It was not that the Arabs were superior to other Muslims: "Nationalism becomes abhorrent when it starts to feel superior." But the Arabs did bear a weightier responsibility than other Muslims:

I believe that on Judgment Day, Arab Muslims will be held to higher standards than non-Arab Muslims. Arab Muslims will be asked why they have deviated and why they have made mistakes....The Arabs carry on their shoulders a heavier burden, for practical and other reasons, toward the recovery of the usurped rights in Palestine and the freeing of Jerusalem from Zionist captivity.<sup>109</sup>

Nothing stated during the conference pointed to the possibility of an Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, an event still six weeks in the future. The conference did indicate, however, that Saddam remained ready to assume the mantle of savior of Islam. The manipulative resort to Islam had become an institutionalized habit which harked back to the Iraqi propaganda war waged against Iran. Islamic arguments once used against Iran, then turned briefly against Israel, would soon be directed against Saudi Arabia. In a matter of weeks, the credibility of Saddam's Islamic appeal would become a matter of controversy, among Muslim believers and non-Muslim observers alike.

### **ISLAM AND KUWAIT**

Saddam had an awareness of the growing strength of Islamic fundamentalism throughout the region, which was fueled by a vast reservoir of free-floating rage against the West. Saddam thought to tap this reservoir by portraying his invasion and annexation of Kuwait as an act of Islamic jihad on behalf of the poor and against the corrupt. The ruling houses of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia had squandered the resources of the Muslims, and did not hesitate to invite foreign "Crusaders" onto Arabia's sacred soil in order to defend their lavish lives. But the oil resources of Kuwait would now be put at the service of the larger cause of Islam and the Arabs, a cause championed by Iraq. Although the secularizing Ba'th regime had done much to oppress Islam at home, Saddam hoped that Muslim masses elsewhere would be so



blinded by their rage against the West that they would welcome him as a modern Saladin, a "sword of Islam." "In the fictional world of Ba'thism," an Iraqi expatriate wrote, "an emperor who has no clothes can forget his condition when he ventures outside."<sup>110</sup>

Saudi Arabia was much more experienced at this kind of appeal. The Saudis already operated an extensive Islamic network, with Saudi clerics defining Islam for many Muslims beyond the kingdom. The core of the Saudi argument was that Iraq's occupation of Kuwait involved the killing and dispossessing of believing Muslims, an act that could not possibly be justified, especially in the name of Islam.

Yet the Saudi argument also had a major flaw. The Saudi decision to invite armies of unbelievers into Arabia to defend the regime against a Muslim neighbor seemed a mockery of Islamic fraternity and threatened to transform the kingdom and its holy shrines into an American protectorate. Still, the Saudis hoped that Muslims elsewhere would be so appalled at the sheer violence of the Iraqi act that they would accept the foreign presence as a sad but unavoidable necessity. As to the argument about the squandering of Muslim resources, the Saudis pointed to their past generosity, even toward Iraq. In any case, God had chosen the Saudi and Kuwaiti ruling houses to receive this vast wealth. "He alone is the Provider and it is He who has bestowed His gifts and sustenance more generously on some than on others," declared MWL Secretary-General Nasif.<sup>111</sup>

The invasion thus opened a new division within the battered body politic of Islam. This time the line ran right down the center of Sunni Islam, dividing Baghdad and Mecca. As Muslims began to choose sides, the division became a chasm. (For more on Saudi and Iraqi propaganda during the crisis, see chapters on Saudi Arabia and Iraq.)

## ISLAM DIVIDED

The response of Muslim opinion to the contrary claims of Iraq and Saudi Arabia varied widely. Street demonstrations created the impression that the sentiment of Sunni Islam, or at least of Sunni Islamic fundamentalism, stood solidly behind Saddam Husayn. In fact, it did not. Muslim opinion was torn by the stark choice forced upon it by the crisis. It is impossible to survey the entire range of positions taken by Muslim movements and individual activists across the expanse of Islam. Still, it is possible to evoke the dilemma of the choice by examining the responses in five major settings.

### Egypt

For Egypt, the Islamic aspect of the crisis had particular significance. Egypt provided the bulk of Arab troops to the international coalition, where they were deployed to fight alongside non-Muslims as well as Muslims, against other Muslims. The regime therefore mustered legions of Muslim scholars inside and outside al-Azhar University to condemn Iraq's invasion and to endorse implicitly the American and Egyptian deployments.

The official campaign was formally led by Shaykh al-Azhar Jadd al-Haqq 'Ali Jadd al-Haqq. Iraq had brought a tragedy upon Islam, declared the Shaykh al-Azhar. In disregard of the most fundamental principles of Islam, Saddam had attacked and brutalized fellow Muslims. Those Muslims had the right to fight back with the aid of other Muslim and "allied" forces.<sup>112</sup> The Shaykh al-Azhar's description of the

foreigners as “allies” rather than “unbelievers” skirted the religious issue of their deployment in Arabia. A similar evasion was evident in the statement made by a group of prominent Egyptian intellectuals in the field of Islamic studies, condemning the “disaster” of the Iraqi invasion: “We believe that the invasion by an Arab Muslim army of the land of an Arab Muslim state, and its annexation, is a reprehensible crime...recognition of the fruits of this crime is yet an additional crime.” But no explicit justification was made for the foreign deployment in Arabia except to emphasize that it was Iraq’s crime that opened the door to foreign intervention.<sup>113</sup>

It was Shaykh Muhammad Mutawalli al-Sha’rawi, the populist preacher and star of Egyptian television, who took on the task of explicitly justifying the resort to assistance from unbelievers in Arabia. Sha’rawi had won fame for his brilliant, seamless interpretations of Qur’anic verses.<sup>114</sup> He now assembled precedents from the life of the Prophet Muhammad for his argument, demonstrating that the Prophet sometimes had to rely on unbelievers — Arabs not yet converted to Islam — for arms and shelter.<sup>115</sup>

Islamic opposition movements, at least in the form of the Muslim Brethren, had to accept half the case made by official Islam. Muhammad Hamid Abu al-Nasr, general supervisor of the Egyptian Muslim Brethren, met with both Iraqi and Kuwaiti officials to express his condemnation of the Iraqi invasion.<sup>116</sup> Muhammad Ma’mun al-Hudaybi, speaker of the National Assembly and a Muslim Brother as well, did the same: “We strongly oppose the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and call upon Iraq to withdraw,” said Hudaybi. But the Muslim Brethren did not accept Sha’rawi’s interpretation of the Prophet’s precedent. Hudaybi rejected the American “occupation” because “Islamic law does not permit any enlisting of assistance from polytheists (*mushrikun*). In fact what is happening now is not assistance-seeking but surrender to the US and giving them the opportunity to do whatever they want to us, despite the fact that they are backing our real enemy [Israel], which is annihilating Muslims in occupied Palestine.”<sup>117</sup>

Still, the Muslim Brethren in Egypt did not put their argument to the test by mounting massive demonstrations. They understood that Egyptian society in general harbored resentment against Iraq for its alleged mistreatment of hundreds of thousands of Egyptian guest workers during the previous decade. While the Muslim Brethren opposed the deployment of Egyptian troops alongside Americans in Saudi Arabia, they chose not to mount a concerted campaign against it. (For more information, see chapter on Egypt.)

### **The Palestinians and Jordan**

Saddam’s appeal was especially strong among Palestinians, many of whom believed that Iraq’s growing military power could offset Israel’s strength and bring liberation closer. Popular Palestinian sentiment urged the PLO and Jordan toward a full embrace of Saddam. This posed a special challenge to the Palestinian and Jordanian Islamic movements, which were oppositional in nature. They were keen to adopt positions that would differentiate them from their respective regimes, which already leaned strongly toward Iraq, in order to gain some domestic political advantage from the crisis.

In the case of Jordan, King Husayn’s support of Iraq was ambiguous on several points. The Jordanian Muslim Brethren, therefore, tried to stay one step ahead of him

by adopting a firmer stand in favor of Iraq and against Saudi Arabia. The Brethren had already made important electoral gains in Jordan and were anxious to enlarge their voting constituency. Sensing the groundswell of pro-Saddam sentiment among Jordanians of Palestinian origin, they began to race King Husayn for leadership of the masses.

A pro-Iraqi position meant breaking a long-standing tie with Saudi Arabia. But the Jordanian Muslim Brethren were now concerned less with Saudi subventions and more with expanding their populist appeal. They leveled withering criticism against Saudi policy in rallies and public statements. "Regardless of our opinion of Saddam Husayn, King Fahd's invitation of American troops to the Holy Land was utterly unacceptable," announced one spokesman. Jerusalem was already under Israeli occupation, he explained; now Mecca and Medina had fallen under American control.<sup>118</sup> In a statement, the Jordanian Muslim Brethren declared that "any regime that accepts foreign protection places itself in the ranks of those who oppose the Islamic nation and loses justification for its existence."<sup>119</sup> This was an indictment of Saudi Arabia and a veiled threat to King Husayn, who had relied upon foreign protection in the past and might do so again in the future. The Jordanian Muslim Brethren became increasingly zealous supporters of Iraq as the crisis unfolded. (For more information, see chapter on Jordan.)

The Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brethren, known in Gaza and the West Bank as Hamas, saw things differently from the Jordanian branch. Given PLO Chairman Yasir 'Arafat's close personal identification with Saddam, Hamas could not hope to set the pace of pro-Saddam sentiment, and it had nothing to gain domestically by simply following the PLO's lead. Furthermore, Hamas had enjoyed considerable financial support from Kuwait in the past, and might do so again.

Hamas was briefly swept along by the initial wave of Muslim resentment against the American deployment. It issued a statement on 13 August denouncing the "vicious Crusader assault on our lands that began with the entry of American forces into Arabia." It called for the unconditional withdrawal of American forces; for a "long and bitter jihad" against "Nazi forces" led by the US; and for Iraq and Kuwait to settle their differences within Arab ranks. The statement also called upon Iraq to "strike at Tel Aviv" if Iraq were itself attacked.<sup>120</sup>

On 17 August, however, Hamas began to backpedal, issuing a statement calling for the restoration of "a free and strong Kuwait."<sup>121</sup> Later in the month, Hamas called for an unconditional Iraqi withdrawal as the first step toward resolution of the conflict:

Our Palestinian people will not forget the noble and favorable stands adopted by the brotherly Kuwaiti people during [Palestine's] own trials and disasters.... We here in Palestine are aware of what it means to lose a homeland and we understand the agony of the Kuwaiti Muslim people. We appeal to Islamic nations to assist the Kuwaiti people.<sup>122</sup>

Dr. 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Rantisi, spokesman for Hamas, demanded that Iraq withdraw from Kuwait *before* the withdrawal of foreign forces from Saudi Arabia. "Before anything else, we demand an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait.... We abhor the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait to the same extent that we abhor the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands." The comparison between the two occupations, when repeated by Hamas clerics in mosque sermons, prompted clashes between Hamas and PLO

supporters in Gaza and the West Bank.<sup>123</sup> Furthermore, the Saudi press favorably reported on support given by Hamas to Kuwaiti resistance inside Kuwait. This support included ambushes of Iraqi troops, according to an unidentified Hamas leader.<sup>124</sup> Hamas's tilt toward Kuwait kept a line open to the wealthy Gulf states, while serving to maintain its independence from the PLO.<sup>125</sup>

The Palestinian and Jordanian Muslim Brethren leaned in opposite directions because of the profound differences in their domestic positions. But Muslim opinion on both banks of the Jordan was more divided still. There were other radical factions, including no fewer than six groups operating under the name of Islamic Jihad.<sup>126</sup> Perhaps the most visible was the Islamic Jihad Movement/ Bayt al-Maqdis, under its self-styled *amir*, Shaykh As'ad Bayyud al-Tamimi of Hebron. Tamimi, who was based in the Palestinian refugee camps around Amman, had a reputation as a firebrand who had displayed pro-Iranian tendencies during the 1980s. Now he went over to Saddam completely. The annexation of Kuwait represented a step toward the unification of Islam, he declared, and "unity can be achieved only by force." He cited the historical precedent of the 12th century wars against the Crusaders when both Nur al-Din al-Zangi and Saladin had forcibly unified Aleppo and Mosul before battling against the Crusaders. "Before we can begin our battle against the Jews, we must unify, and there is no unification except by coercion."<sup>127</sup> Fighting alongside Iraq was a personal religious obligation (*fard 'ayn*) for every Muslim; a Muslim soldier who died fighting alongside the Americans would die the death of a non-Muslim.<sup>128</sup> Tamimi made this pledge of allegiance: "We hope that [Saddam] will declare himself the caliph of all Muslims so that we could pay him allegiance (*bay'a*) and all Muslims could pay him allegiance. He could then change history and Baghdad would once again become the capital of the world and the seat of the caliphate."<sup>129</sup> Tamimi also declared: "I view Palestine as the 20th Iraqi province. Kuwait is the 19th province, and Palestine should also belong to Iraq."<sup>130</sup>

The wide variety of positions adopted by Palestinians in the name of Islam reflected long-standing splits in the Palestinian Islamic movement. The clash of Iraqi and Saudi claims, far from erasing these divisions, reconfirmed them. There was no single Palestinian Islamic reading of the crisis, and no consensus over whether a free Kuwait or a strengthened Saddam would best serve the cause of Muslim Palestine. (For more information, see chapter on the West Bank and Gaza.)

### **Algeria and Tunisia**

A deepening economic and social crisis in North Africa had given rise to widespread Islamic fundamentalist sentiment there. Saddam's defiance of the Western powers and their Arab Gulf allies touched a deep chord, and North African cities witnessed massive anti-American demonstrations. Yet even here, there were variations that arose from local circumstances.

The most successful Muslim movement in North Africa was Algeria's Islamic Salvation Front (usually known by its French acronym, FIS). In June, the FIS had scored an impressive electoral victory in provincial and municipal elections, and began a campaign for early parliamentary elections. It saw the Gulf crisis as an opportunity to rally its constituency and capture the electoral allegiance of the masses who were demonstrating in the streets of Algiers and Constantine. Faced with a choice between Saudi subventions and expanded populist appeal, the FIS preferred



the latter. Its sense of Islamic solidarity, which in the past had bound it to Saudi Arabia, now drew it inexorably toward Iraq.

The leader of the FIS, 'Abbas al-Madani, did try to take a middle course and stressed FIS neutrality. He made two highly publicized mediation rounds of the ME, meeting with Fahd and Saddam several times. But, addressing the mass rallies, Madani set nuance aside. Upon returning from one of his mediation missions, Madani told an Algiers rally:

What is taking place in the Gulf is a new form of Crusades. In addition, it is a violation of Islamic sovereignty and an aggression against the sanctity of the two holy mosques, given the flagrant US presence and the Saudi regime's hasty permission for it to be there. This regime has allowed itself to interfere in God's will and manage the country as if it owned it. It does not. It is God's land, the land of Islam, the land of all Muslims. The Islamic nation cannot endure such regimes anymore, regimes which are trading in their countries. Therefore, the FIS is calling upon the Islamic nation [*umma*] as a whole to prepare itself as one to abolish such borders and topple such regimes, whose collusion with colonialism has become flagrant.<sup>131</sup>

In its official statements, the FIS also took a position against the borders that divided Arabs and Muslims, maintaining that these borders were created by imperialism to serve its interests and foment division among peoples of the Islamic nation. The border between Iraq and Kuwait did just that. The vast oil wealth of the Gulf was not the property of the ruling families who squirreled their riches away in foreign banks. It belonged to the Islamic nation as a whole.<sup>132</sup> Such arguments left little room for credible claims of neutrality.

More credible were the claims of the Tunisian Muslim Brethren, who had transformed themselves from a clandestine movement into a political party known as al-Nahda (the Renaissance). The Tunisian party did not yet have the confidence or standing of the FIS in Algeria. Al-Nahda was not yet legal, and the regime continued to accuse it of association with terrorist cells uncovered by the police.<sup>133</sup> The Gulf crisis caught al-Nahda in the process of publicly announcing the members in its governing council, a move made to convince the public that the party was no longer subversive and that it could be trusted to participate in the electoral process. At this particular juncture, al-Nahda needed regime legitimation rather than mass support, and it showed circumspection in its stand on the crisis. Rejecting the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in a statement on 19 August, the party depicted the attack as reprehensible "regardless of its motives," for it damaged the interests of the Islamic nation. Al-Nahda also condemned "American imperialism," although in comparatively mild tones.<sup>134</sup>

Yet a leading figure in al-Nahda saw things differently. Rashid al-Ghannushi, one of the founders of the movement, placed himself squarely in Iraq's camp, maintaining that Fahd had committed a "colossal crime." He did not support Saddam personally: "We are not worshiping personalities. We know what they are and we entreat God to give them guidance. But anyone who confronts the enemies of Islam is my friend and anyone who puts himself in the service of the enemies of Islam is my enemy."<sup>135</sup> Ghannushi subsequently traveled throughout the Arab and Islamic world, speaking out vehemently against Saudi policy and the American "Crusaders" deployed in the Gulf.

To some extent, both the Algerian and the Tunisian movements attempted to speak in several voices and to hedge their bets. But the widely different domestic predicaments of each movement placed them on opposite sides of the widening divide.

As indicated by this limited sampling, the response of the Muslim movements to the fall of Kuwait was not monolithic. The Iraqi invasion and the American deployment posed fundamental dilemmas. Could the cause of Islam be advanced by a ruler uncommitted to Islam? Could the cause of Islam be defended by non-Islamic allies? These complex questions found countless answers, and continued to divide even the most fervent adherents of Islam.

## ISLAM CONFERS AND MEDIATES

By early September, the prominent Islamic movements and leaders had declared their positions on the crisis. The war of words now moved into a new phase in which both sides sought the sanction of Islamic "consensus." This could be expressed only in some sort of gathering, supposedly representing the collective opinion of Islam.

### BLESSING THE FOREIGNERS

Saudi Arabia again relied upon the MWL to summon its clients and extract from them the necessary resolutions condemning Iraq and approving the foreign deployment in Arabia. Accordingly, the MWL convened an International Islamic Conference on the Current Situation in the Gulf, which met in Mecca from 10–12 September.

The conference was attended by over 200 'ulama and activists from 67 countries. It was chaired by Burhan al-Din Rabbani, minister of justice and deputy minister of foreign affairs in the Mujahidin-run provisional government of Afghanistan. Also in attendance were Shaykh al-Azhar Jadd al-Haqq; Afghan resistance leader Gulbuddin Hikmatyar; Nur Misuari, leader of the Filipino Moro Liberation Front; former Sudanese premier Muhammad 'Uthman al-Mirghani and former president Marshal 'Abd al-Rahman Siwar al-Dhahab; Moroccan Shaykh Muhammad al-Makki al-Wazani al-Hasani; and Shaykh Tal'at Taj al-Din, mufti of Ufa in the Soviet Union.

The proceedings produced no surprises. In his message to the conference, King Fahd called the Iraqi invasion "an abominable crime against Islam." Saudi Arabia's summoning of "friendly forces" for support constituted "a right given to us by the teachings of the Islamic religion, as corroborated by the Muslim 'ulama everywhere."<sup>136</sup> Rabbani called the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait a "detestable" deprivation of a Muslim people's security. The American "Nation of Islam" leader Warith al-Din (formerly Wallace) Muhammad denounced the Iraqi act for weakening Islam.<sup>137</sup> The conference condemned "the Iraqi aggression against Kuwait, the stealing of money and property, the destruction of institutions, the desecration of sanctities." The conferees concluded that the help of foreign forces "was necessitated by legitimate need, and that Islamic law allows such a measure as long as it falls within the confines defined by the law." Once Iraq withdrew from Kuwait and the Iraqi threat was removed, "these forces should leave the region."<sup>138</sup>

In this manner, Saudi Arabia completed the collection of Islamic endorsements for its decision. The ICO, speaking for Muslim states, had already condemned Iraq. Egyptian religious authorities, speaking for establishment Islam, had done the same.

Now a popular conference had endorsed the foreign deployment. Still, the conference was only a partial success. There was criticism from anticipated quarters. Hizballah's Tufayli declared that the conference would not do the Saudis "any good. They violate Islamic law by issuing rulings which allow them to humiliate Islam, open the holy lands to atheists, and make Muslim wealth an easy target for the imperialists."<sup>139</sup> More worrisome was the criticism implied by the absence of previous supporters. An MWL official regretted the absence of delegations from Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Palestine, Sudan, Tunisia, and Yemen. "They should have attended to hear what took place because they might have been misled and don't know the truth," he said.<sup>140</sup> In fact, those who stayed away knew that the Saudis would utilize their very presence as an endorsement of Saudi policy. Their absence was calculated.

### MUSLIM BRETHERN MEDIATION

The most notable absentees from the Mecca conference were the leaders of the Muslim Brethren in several countries, who had adopted a position of ostensible neutrality. Although their anti-Western rhetoric suggested a tilt toward Iraq, they also had long-standing ties with Saudi Arabia, the Gulf emirates, and Kuwait's ruling Al Sabah family. The desire not to burn their bridges led them to plan their own mediation effort, which would appeal to both sides in the name of Islamic solidarity. The chances of success were nil. But the mission of the Muslim Brethren was intended to cover the flanks of the mediators themselves, who wanted popular credit for siding with Iraq and financial credits for siding with Saudi Arabia. Similar mediation initiatives had figured in the regional policy of the Muslim Brethren during the latter half of the Iraqi-Iranian War (see *MECS* 1987, pp. 160–61; 1988, pp. 178, 196, 198–99; 1989, pp. 188–89).

The mediation was launched during a World Islamic Popular Gathering that met in Amman from 12–15 September, convened by the general supervisor of the Muslim Brethren in Jordan, 'Abd al-Rahman Khalifa. Also in attendance were Ghannushi (see above); Hasan al-Turabi, former secretary-general of Sudan's dissolved National Islamic Front; Qazi Husayn Ahmad, secretary of the Pakistani Jama'ate Islami; Necmettin Erbakan, leader of Turkey's National Salvation Party; Yasin 'Abd al-'Aziz, head of Yemen's Muslim Brethren; and other figures representing the Syrian and Palestinian Muslim Brethren. A delegation headed by the supreme guide of the Egyptian Muslim Brethren, Muhammad Hamid Abu al-Nasr, also planned to attend, but the Egyptian authorities prevented their departure at Cairo airport, although one member of the delegation managed to join the mediation mission later on.<sup>141</sup>

The resolutions of the "gathering" denounced "the sedition and split in the ranks of Muslims" and called the Gulf crisis a conspiracy of foreigners, without taking sides in the issue.<sup>142</sup> A delegation then departed for Saudi Arabia, where its members met with Fahd, unnamed members of the Sabah family, and officials of the MWL. The delegation then continued to Baghdad, where it consulted with Saddam and members of the Revolutionary Command Council, and went on to Iran, where it met with Khameneh'i and Rafsanjani. The host countries all along the way exploited the delegation's presence, claiming that its members had endorsed their particular positions in the crisis. On Khalifa's return, he issued a cautious statement on behalf of the delegation, calling for the departure of foreign forces from Saudi Arabia and Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait. He also urged consideration of "Iraq's legitimate

demands" and the Kuwaiti people's "legitimate aspirations in their homeland."<sup>143</sup>

But the delegation also "praised the spirit of steadfastness of the Iraqi leadership and people, and their total readiness to sacrifice in defense of Islamic principles."<sup>144</sup> In personal remarks, Khalifa directed criticism squarely at the US, the "prime enemy" of the Muslims, which by "devious and underhanded methods" now controlled Mecca and Medina.<sup>145</sup> Hasan al-Turabi predicted that war would produce a jihad which would begin with demonstrations and then branch out to attacks against foreign interests throughout the world.<sup>146</sup> Such statements did little to establish the neutrality of the delegation, and nothing came of the mediation mission. The group planned to follow up with its own peace plan, which was to be endorsed by some kind of "general Islamic conference" in November, but neither the peace plan nor the conference materialized.<sup>147</sup>

### THE THREAT OF JIHAD

By making overtures to Iraq, the Muslim movements sought to take advantage of popular sentiment against the American deployment in the Gulf. Although they did not cut their ties with Saudi Arabia and the Gulf emirates completely, as evidenced by their calls for an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, they uttered these calls *sotto voce*, whereas their denunciations of the US deployment, and, by implication, Saudi Arabia's policy, were loud and strident.

These denunciations did indeed cause some anxiety among their targets within the international coalition. As the year ended, speculation about war reached fever pitch throughout the world. Concern over an enraged Islam began to figure in war calculations. Iraq's jihad rhetoric, and more particularly its wider impact, generated a growing apprehension over the possibility of an Islamic backlash to a military operation — a reaction that might undermine the resolve if not the stability of ME regimes aligned with the international coalition. Would there be Islamic terrorism? What would happen if the Shi'i shrine cities of Najaf and Karbala were damaged? What if fighting coincided with Ramadan, or the next pilgrimage? Iraq and its fundamentalist supporters did everything possible to play on these concerns, promising an "uncontrollable wave of wrath" across the Islamic world if war broke out.<sup>148</sup>

But as 1991 would demonstrate, Saddam did not command the power to conjure up the genie of jihad.

### NOTES

For the place and frequency of publications cited here, and for the full name of the publication, news agency, radio station, or monitoring service where an abbreviation is used, please see "List of Sources." Only in the case of more than one publication bearing the same name is the place of publication noted here. The journal *al-'Alam* cited here is the London publication, unless otherwise noted.

1. *Kayhan* (London), 22 February 1990.
2. R. Tehran, 5 June — DR, 5 June 1990.
3. On the restoration of relations, see *IHT*, 28 September 1990.
4. R. Tehran (in English), 28 September — DR, 28 September 1990.
5. *Kayhan* (Tehran), 9 December — DR, 9 December 1990.
6. *The Independent*, 4 February 1990.
7. *The Times*, *NYT*, 28 December 1990.



8. *The Times*, *NYT*, 28 December 1990.
9. R. Tehran, 26 December — DR, 26 December 1990.
10. Voice of the Oppressed, 27 December — DR, 27 December 1990.
11. Quoted by IRNA, 27 April — DR, 2 May 1990.
12. *Al-Hilal al-Duwali* (London), 16 January 1991.
13. *DT*, reprinted in *JP*, 19 December 1990.
14. Two recent collected volumes address the impact of Iran's revolution in the wider Islamic world. See David Menashri (ed.), *The Iranian Revolution and the Muslim World* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990); and John L. Esposito, *The Iranian Revolution: Its Global Impact* (Miami: Florida International University Press, 1990).
15. IRNA, 28 January — DR, 31 January 1990.
16. See I. Goldziher, C. van Arendonk, and A.S. Tritton, "Ahl al-Bayt," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., Vol. 1 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960), pp. 257–58.
17. Account of conference, *al-'Alam*, 9 June 1990.
18. For more on the relationship between Iran and Hizballah, see Martin Kramer, "Redeeming Jerusalem: The Pan-Islamic Premise of Hizballah," in D. Menashri (ed.), *The Iranian Revolution and the Muslim World* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), pp. 105–30. For developments in Hizballah generally, see Martin Kramer, *Hezbollah's Vision of the West*, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Policy Paper No. 16 (Washington, DC, October 1989).
19. Interview with Husayn al-Musawi, *al-Diyar*, 31 August 1990.
20. Interview with Tufayli, *al-Raya* (Beirut), 25 November 1990.
21. *Le Monde*, 1 November 1990.
22. AFP, 13 November — DR, 15 November 1990.
23. Report on meeting, *al-Diyar*, 31 October 1990.
24. Interview with Tufayli, *al-Hawadith*, 7 December 1990.
25. Interview with "Abu Yasir" (Muhammad Fanish), director of Hizballah's political bureau, *al-Diyar*, 25 October; interview with Shaykh Na'im Qasim, *al-Diyar*, 28 October 1990.
26. Text of agreement, Damascus TV, 4 November — DR, 6 November 1990.
27. Voice of the Oppressed, 7 November — DR, 7 November 1990.
28. For the dynamics of the hostage-holding, see Martin Kramer, "Hostage Bazaar," *New Republic*, 30 April 1990.
29. Quoted in *Report of the Congressional Committees Investigating the Iran-Contra Affair, With Supplemental, Minority, and Additional Views* (Washington: US Government Printing Office, November 1987), p. 245.
30. Quoted in *ME*, November 1990.
31. Voice of the Oppressed, 25 April — DR, 25 April 1990.
32. Report on Khiyam prisoners, *WP*, 25 April 1990.
33. *TT*, 22 February 1990.
34. IRNA, 7 March — DR, 7 March 1990.
35. Voice of the Oppressed, 31 March — DR, 2 April 1990.
36. AFP, 10 March — DR, 12 March 1990 (quoting Tehran *Kayhan*).
37. Husayn al-Musawi, quoted by AFP, 25 April — DR, 26 April 1990.
38. *TT*, 22 February; cf. remark by Besharati, IRNA, 18 March — DR, 19 March 1990.
39. *Le Monde*, 29–30, 31 July 1990.
40. Interview with Husayn al-Musawi, *al-Diyar*, 31 August 1990.
41. For the Iranian account of the visit, see *al-Tawhid*, December 1990–January 1991. The visit was related to the mediation mission of the Brethren, discussed below.
42. The account that follows is based on the report of the conference in *al-'Alam*, 22 December 1990. A similar conference had been sponsored by Iran two years earlier in Beirut, but had been limited to Iran's Lebanese and Palestinian clients; see *MECS* 1988, p. 199.
43. For text of Ghannushi's speech to conference, see *al-Islam wa-Filastin* 6 February 1991.
44. Interview with Khalil al-Quqa, *al-'Alam*, 26 January 1991.
45. *Al-'Alam*, 22 December 1990.
46. For more details on the electoral successes of Islamic parties in the Middle East, see the previous volumes of *MECS* for the cases of Egypt, Israel, and Jordan.

47. It was impossible to put a figure on Saudi and other Gulf subsidies to Islamic parties. Neither the donors nor the recipients had any interest in publicizing their relationship. The Saudis did not wish to open the door to the accusation that they intervened in the domestic affairs of other countries, and the Islamic parties did not want to provide ammunition to electoral rivals who might accuse them of accepting foreign largesse.
48. *AAI*, 29 January 1990.
49. *Ibid.*, 8 January 1990.
50. *Ibid.*, 28 May, 18 June 1990.
51. *Ibid.*, 2 April, 11 June 1990.
52. *Ibid.*, 12 February 1990.
53. *Ibid.*, 22 January 1990.
54. *Ibid.*, 9 April 1990.
55. Interview with Nasir, *ibid.*, 5 November 1990.
56. For an account of controversy surrounding the prize, see *ME*, July 1990.
57. *Al-Da'wa al-Islamiyya*, 6 May 1990.
58. *Ibid.*, 26 September 1990.
59. For resolutions and recommendations, see *ibid.*, 23, 30 May 1990.
60. For resolutions and recommendations, see *ibid.*, 3 October 1990.
61. Final statement, R. Tripoli, 2 November — DR, 6 November 1990.
62. In 1976, Tripoli hosted a Seminar on Islamic-Christian Dialogue, a joint project of the Vatican and Libya. Qadhdhafi saw this as an opportunity to extract political concessions from inattentive Vatican representatives. The seminar ended in an embarrassing fiasco when the Vatican had to disavow those parts of the joint final declaration which condemned Zionism and affirmed the Arab character of Jerusalem. On the episode and its context, see Martin Kramer, *Israel in the Muslim-Christian Dialogue*, Institute of Jewish Affairs, Research Report No. 11-12 (London, November 1986), pp. 8-11.
63. *Al-Ushbu' al-'Arabi*, 26 February 1990.
64. *Al-Da'wa al-Islamiyya*, 26 September 1990.
65. For an overview of the controversy, see Martin Kramer, "Khomeyni's Messengers: The Disputed Pilgrimage of Islam," in E. Sivan and M. Friedman (eds.), *Religious Radicalism and Politics in the Middle East* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), pp. 174-97.
66. Text of letter, *Kayhan* (Tehran), 11 April — DR, 24 April 1990.
67. *AAI*, 28 April 1990.
68. Statement in *al-Tawhid*, August-September 1990.
69. Khameneh'i's message, R. Tehran, 28 June — DR, 2 July 1990.
70. SPA, 3 July 1990.
71. E.g., *Le Monde*, 5 July 1990.
72. *MEI*, 20 July 1990.
73. Claim by the Shi'i oppositionist Organization of the Islamic Revolution in the Arabian Peninsula, IRNA, 13 July — DR, 16 July 1990.
74. Senior Interior Ministry source quoted by SPA, 11 July 1990.
75. R. Riyadh, 3 July 1990.
76. A general survey of reactions in *al-'Alam*, 14 July 1990.
77. Khameneh'i's address, R. Tehran, 11 July — DR, 12 July 1990.
78. R. Tehran, 6 July — DR, 9 July 1990.
79. Mohtashemi's commentary in *Kayhan* (Tehran), 8 July — DR, 26 July 1990. The same argument, in more detail, was published in *al-Jihad*, July-August 1990.
80. Indonesian reactions in *al-'Alam*, 28 July 1990.
81. Turkish attitude in *MEI*, 20 July 1990.
82. Sa'ud al-Faysal quoted by R. Tehran, 30 September — DR, 1 October 1990.
83. Velayati quoted by IRNA, 4 October — DR, 4 October 1990.
84. *Crescent International*, 1-15 February 1991.
85. *NYT*, 24 April 1990.
86. *FT*, 5 June 1990.
87. *AAI*, 18 June 1990.
88. *Ibid.*, 10 December 1990.

89. Ibid., 25 June 1990.
90. Ibid., 15 January 1990.
91. R. Riyadh, 7 February — DR, 14 February 1990.
92. Mushtak Parker in *ME*, May 1990.
93. Algabid openly complained about the failure of member states to meet their financial obligations; see *AAI*, 26 March 1990.
94. General account of the conference, *al-'Alam*, 11 August 1990.
95. Editorial, *TT*, 15 July 1990.
96. Analysis of Egyptian-Iranian relations, *al-'Alam*, 4 August 1990.
97. Taskhiri remarks, R. Tehran, 1 August — DR, 2 August 1990.
98. SPA, 1 August — DR, 2 August 1990.
99. *AAI*, 5 February 1990.
100. R. Islamabad, 1 August — DR, 2 August; *al-'Alam*, 11 August 1990.
101. KUNA, 30 July 1990.
102. Text in MENA, 4 August — DR, 6 August 1990.
103. Riyadh TV, 7 October — DR, 8 October; *AAI*, 19 November; *al-'Alam*, 24 November 1990.
104. E.g., SPA, 8 January — DR, 10 January 1991.
105. USIA, 1 October; SPA, 2 October — DR, 2 October 1990.
106. IRNA, 3 November — DR, 5 November 1990.
107. GNA, 7 February — DR, 8 February 1991.
108. Text of resolutions, INA, 18 June — DR, 19 June 1990.
109. Speech by Saddam Husayn, R. Baghdad, 18 June — DR, 19 June 1990.
110. Samir al-Khalil, *Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 112.
111. *AAI*, 1 October 1990.
112. Text and critique of Jadd al-Haqq statement, *al-'Alam*, 15 September 1990.
113. Statement by intellectuals on 21 August, *al-Islam wa-Filastin*, 3 September 1990.
114. On Sha'rawi, see Johannes J. G. Jansen, *The Neglected Duty* (New York: Macmillan, 1986), pp. 121–50.
115. Interview with Sha'rawi, *al-Liwa al-Islami*, 13 September 1990.
116. *Al-Nur*, 5 September — DR, 17 September 1990.
117. Hudaybi quoted in *Crescent International*, 1–15 December 1990.
118. *JT*, 20 August 1990.
119. *Al-Hilal al-Duwali*, 16–31 August 1990.
120. Text of Hamas statement, *al-Islam wa-Filastin*, 3 September 1990.
121. Hamas statement of 17 August 1990.
122. *Al-Quds al-'Arabi*, 30 August; *JP*, 20 August 1990.
123. *Al-Quds al-'Arabi*, 13 September 1990.
124. *Al-Jazira*, 19 October 1990.
125. Summary of Hamas position, *Ila Filastin*, November 1990; *Jerusalem Report*, 17 January 1991. Hamas's tilt would later pay off when in 1991 Saudi Arabia reportedly shifted its \$28m. monthly subsidy from the PLO to Hamas; *Jerusalem Report*, 23 May 1991.
126. Breakdown of groups, *Jerusalem Report*, 10 January 1991.
127. Tamimi's views, *al-Dustur* (London), 3 September 1990.
128. Ibid.
129. Tamimi quoted in *Crescent International*, 1–15 December 1990.
130. Interview with Tamimi, *Der Morgen*, 26 January — DR, 4 February 1991.
131. Madani's speech, R. Algiers, 17 August — DR, 20 August 1990.
132. *Al-'Alam*, 8 September 1990.
133. *FR*, 13 December 1990.
134. Text of al-Nahda statement, *al-Islam wa-Filastin*, 3 September 1990.
135. Ghannushi's remarks during visit to Sudan, *al-Islam wa-Filastin*, 5 October; *Ila Filastin*, November; *Crescent International*, 1–15 December 1990.
136. Riyadh TV, 11 September — DR, 13 September 1990.
137. *Al-Riyad*, 12 September 1990.
138. Text of resolutions, SPA, 13 September — DR, 13 September 1990.

139. Voice of the Oppressed, 15 September — DR, 17 September 1990.
140. WF, 13 September 1990.
141. *Al-Dustur* (Amman), 13 September; *Filastin al-Muslima*, November 1990.
142. Text of statement, *al-Sha'b* (Jerusalem), 18 September — DR, 21 September 1990. Outside the conference, individual participants spoke with less reserve. See the remarks by Ghannushi and Turabi before an Amman audience in *al-Islam wa-Filastin*, 5 October; *al-Ghadir*, December 1990.
143. Jordan TV, 1 October — DR, 1 October 1990.
144. Ibid.
145. *Al-Dustur* (Amman), 1 October 1990.
146. AFP, 1 October 1990.
147. *Filastin al-Muslima*, November 1990.
148. Promised by FIS leader 'Ali Belhaj, INA, 13 January — DR, 15 January 1991.